Sharpshanks nervously extended a twenty like he thought he was Marcus Tullius Cicero, that world-class stoic loud-mouth, offering his neck to the barbarians....

A week's pin money from Thing Street Asylum.

Johnny hesitated, but he took it.

Anyone who knew him even remotely would have immediately attributed his hesitancy entirely to greed.

He hadn't made his ten percent.

*****

Jah Lo See had a dossier full of extensive three-way correspondence between herself, her social worker, and Citizen Hearse, the CEO and Sole Proprietor of Thing Street Psychomes.

She accused Citizen Hearse of all sorts of things: of running a chain of bordellos which he filled with women he smuggled into the country from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, seduced, drugged, exploited, then sensationalized in the syndicated columns of his various organs; of maintaining a Thing Street-based empire of street drugs and casual sex, sometimes referred to as the jiggy-jigg; of corrupting Thing Street Psychomes and turning the inmates against her by spreading rumors about her bad morals and worse mental and physical hygiene, etc.

She brought news of a terrible quarrel with the perfidious Citizen Hearse. How he should have known what he was getting into when he rented to her. She was a mental case, an epileptic; if he argued with her, she'd have a SEIZURE.

*****

Sharpshanks came three times a day.

He'd borrowed a twony every time, but by the third time Johnny wasn't in the mood to give him more than a loony. He assumed his conventional pose, holding his hands below his waist and gazing at his feet. Johnny noticed that today they were not clad in the cheap sandals he had seen him in yesterday, but in shiny, old, expensive-looking leather shoes (probably Dix). He would wait and work the muscles of his jaw, as if he expected Johnny to automatically give him what he knew he wanted; Johnny refused to oblige him to that extent.

Jah Lo See said he wanted the money for a subway ride. Johnny said, A subway ride cost more.

She laughed; a subway ride meant jiggy-jig.

He must have been saving up....

*****

Romeo said there was no darkness in his life.

Johnny thought that wasn't true; life was always dark. Hydro couldn't illuminate everything....

It was a waste of electricity....